



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Education YES! Will Lift Up Michigan Schools

In a bold move designed to lift up all Michigan schools, the State Board of Education approved the final pieces of a new comprehensive state accreditation system that will assign grades to all Michigan school buildings, beginning in 2003.

With unanimous action on cut scores for the status and change indicators of Education YES! - A Yardstick for Excellent Schools, Board members also approved an interim formula for growth - the third testing measure of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) portion of the system.

"We have moved forward with an enormous piece of work today," said Kathleen Straus (D-Detroit), State Board of Education President. "The state will finally have an accreditation system for its schools that will be based on more than a single test on a single day. These important decisions were not made in a vacuum - thousands of people, from teachers and parents to business and labor, were engaged on the construction of Education YES!, and we need to be proud of that action."

"This will truly be a system that is about lifting up our schools, teachers, and children," said Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins. "The State Board should be commended for its work today. It has created a school accreditation system for the 21st century that is the nation's leader." Watkins threw the state's old accreditation system out in 2001 in favor of this radical new approach that uses multiple measures to assess schools.

The Michigan Business Leaders for Educational Excellence, affiliated with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, endorsed the Education YES! system today after the Board took its action.

"We have appreciated the opportunity for input the State Board has given us and applaud the action they've taken today," said Jim Sandy, director of the Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence. "This system will ultimately serve the parents and children of this state and will concretely impact the quality of education in Michigan for years to come. Education YES! can become an extremely positive legacy for this State Board of Education."

In November, Sandy Kress, a former top aide to the Bush Administration and one of the architects of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, commended the State Board of Education and the Department of Education for its remarkable work toward developing a 21st century accreditation system for schools.

"I think Michigan is on the path to becoming the country's leader for these important educational reforms," Kress said during the Board's morning Committee of the Whole meeting. "This system is absolutely groundbreaking."

"I am delighted that the State Board of Education was able to get Education YES! completed by the end of the year," said Michael David Warren, Jr., Secretary of the State Board of Education. "We are moving forward with an accreditation system that is in alignment with the federal educational guidelines and is about improving the education offered in all of our schools, especially those that have chronically underperformed."

This innovative growth measure is another tool the state can utilize to track achievement levels in the same group of students from grade four to grade seven. The measure will be used eventually to track growth from grade seven to 11, and also will evolve to paint, for the first time, a fair, balanced picture of individual student achievement.

Previous Board decisions regarding Education YES! will allow schools with A, B, or C grades to be fully accredited. The MEAP portion of Education YES! will count as 67 percent of a school building's composite grade. The remaining 33 percent will be calculated in other crucial areas, including parental involvement, graduation and dropout rates, quality of school infrastructure, and other learning indicators.

The state has already begun piloting the collection of learning indicator data with a handful of Michigan schools. Full data collection will begin in January.

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